



## III. Early Career Years

*The following information pertains to the STRS Defined Benefit Plan only.*

up to 12 months, for a reason other than disability or military service. If medical reports show that you became incapacitated within four months of your last day of service (and remained continuously incapacitated to the date of death), or if you were receiving a disability allowance under Coverage A, your beneficiary(ies) remains eligible for the lump-sum death payment and survivor benefits.

### Refund of Your Account

Your STRS member contributions to the Defined Benefit Plan, plus interest, are refundable upon termination from all employment to perform creditable service in any California public school. However, refund of your contributions terminates your STRS membership, and you will not be eligible for any benefits, including a life-long monthly retirement benefit, from STRS.

### Refund Amount

All contributions made by a member, plus credited interest, will be refunded upon written request. This includes tax-deferred member contributions under the “Employer Pick-Up” program. Partial refunds are not permitted. Employer and state contributions are not refundable.

### Is a Refund Right for Me?

Members with less than five years of service credit, who do not plan to return to teaching, and who are not eligible for retirement with any of the California public systems listed on page 27, may want to consider a refund. However, career teachers with substantial service credit, or those who are eligible for retirement with another California public system, and are approaching age 55, are urged to talk with a STRS Regional Counselor to learn more about issues that should be considered.



**Y**ou will be **vested** with a right to a lifetime retirement allowance when you have accumulated five years of creditable service in the STRS DB Plan. This allowance will be available to you as early as age 55. Active members also have important benefits including disability and survivor benefits. See Sections VII and VIII.

### If You Terminate Your STRS-Covered Employment

Active members contributing to STRS are eligible for important benefit coverage, including disability and survivor benefits. Termination of STRS-covered employment and a subsequent refund of your accumulated contributions plus interest cancels any eligibility for monthly benefits from STRS. *Termination of STRS-covered employment for four months or more eliminates any eligibility for survivor or disability benefits.* This time limit does not apply to service retirement.

### Exceptions to the Four-Month Limit

The four-month limit does not apply if you die during an approved leave of absence of



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### Consequences of a Refund

If you withdraw your contributions and interest before age 59 1/2, you may be subject to income tax and a 10 percent federal excise tax. (See Section IX, Tax Information and Legal Issues)

If you take a refund and later redeposit contributions and interest and return to membership:

- your membership date changes to your return date
- you will be covered under Coverage B for Survivors and Disability benefits
- you must accumulate a year of service credit before you are eligible for STRS Survivors benefits
- you lose retirement credit for previously accumulated unused sick leave.



See Section XI, Glossary, for more information regarding unused sick leave.

### More Refund Information

More information is available in the STRS brochure *Refunds*. You may obtain a brochure, and learn more about Refunds through STRS Teletalk messages.

Call 1-800-228-5453 and select message #700 for refund information, #103 to order the *Refunds* brochure, AD 367B, or #201 for Regional Counseling interview information. To order forms or brochures, call 1-800-228-5453 and select option two.



### If You Have Less than One Year of Service Credit

If you have less than one year of service credit, the only benefit payable to a surviving beneficiary, if you should die, is a refund of your accumulated retirement contributions plus interest.